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nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are my ways exalted above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts." (Isaiah lv, 8, 9.) "You see, then," says he, "that it would be worse than presumption for you to compare your ways with God's, which are so much exalted above you." "Well," says Ned, "I suppose 'tis true for you, I cannot compare my ways to God's; but still I am sure that Christ would sooner grant his blessed mother's request than mine, or any one besides me; for no one is so near to him as his blessed mother." Well, Sir, the reader then read for us these passages following: "And as He was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold his mother and his brethren stood without seeking to speak to Him; and one said unto Him, Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without seeking thee. But He answering him that told him, said: Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, He said: Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother." (Matt. xii. 46-50.) "And now," says he to Ned, "will you hesitate to trust that loving Saviour who condescends to call every true follower of his by those endearing terms?" "Oh," says Ned, "I am still certain that 'tis better pray to the Blessed Virgin; for," says he, "she is more blessed than any one else." "So thought a certain woman," said the reader, "who gladly listened to the divine words which fell from the lips of her Saviour; for she exclaimed in the fulness of her heart, 'Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the paps that gave thee suck' (Luke xi. 27). 'This, then,' says he, 'was the moment for Jesus to exalt his mother as the mediatrix—to declare her to be the Queen of heaven, the Advocate of sinners, and the Comforter of the afflicted, as she is falsely styled by the Church of Rome. Does he do so? No," says he; "but he declares, 'Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it' (verse 28). And now," says the reader, "I would wish to correct a false impression that has been stamped on your minds—that we of the national Church of Ireland despise and reject the Blessed Virgin. We do not despise or reject her, and in proof of this we have in our prayer-books her hymn, which is always read at evening service; it is as follows:—'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him throughout all generations. He hath showed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake unto our fathers, Abraham and his seed for ever' (Luke i. 46-56). Now," says he, "you will all bear in mind that this hymn of the Blessed Virgin was addressed by her to *God her Saviour*, and we of the national Church of Ireland follow *her* example, and address this hymn in *her* own words to God our Saviour; for we dare not address this hymn to herself, for then we would be making her a God, and incurring the displeasure of our heavenly Father, who says that he is a 'jealous God, and will not give his glory to another.'

Well, sir, when he'd heard the beautiful hymn read from the Protestant Prayer-book, he looked hymn surprised at his wife and then at me, "and," says he, "I own that hymn does not look like dishonouring the Blessed Virgin; but I think it gives her the *right* kind of honour; for it declares her *blessed*, as she herself prophesied." "Just so," says the reader; "and you may rely on it, that if the Blessed Virgin came down from heaven, she would pronounce the practice of praying to *her* instead of *her Saviour* as false and idolatrous. Remember, too," says he, "that if you love the Blessed Virgin you will pray to Jesus and not to her; for she desires you to do 'whatever He (Jesus) shall say to you.' The blessed Jesus says to you, 'Come to me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is sweet, and my burden light' (Matt. xi., 28-30). Go to Him, then," says he, "for the Blessed Virgin desires you do 'whatever He says to you.' Are you troubled in heart or mind? if so, go to Jesus and you shall find peace—a peace which the world cannot give. He loves you with an infinite love; go to Him, then, for He only is 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no man cometh to the Father but by him' (John xiv. 6). Go to Him," says he, "'For there is but one God and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus' (1 Tim. ii. 5). Go to Him, for St. Peter tells you, 'Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved' (Acts iv. 12). All these passages are from the Douay Bible.

If they should have any more talk hereafter on this subject I will let you know.—I remain, sir, your very obedient, humble servant, till death, HUMPHREY LEARY.

## BLACK IMAGES OF THE VIRGIN.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR,—In your number of Dec., 1852, I perceive you give an account of an image of the Blessed Virgin at Tournay, whose face is quite black. Possibly you are not aware that there is another very celebrated black image of the Virgin Mary at Mariazell, in Styria, a very celebrated place of pilgrimage in the Austrian dominions, which has, by some, been called the *Loretto* of Germany, from the vast number of pilgrims who annually visit her shrine in that place.

The Church of Mariazell (which is situated in the midst of the Styrian mountains) is the largest and richest in Styria. Its treasury is, indeed, overloaded with riches, the votive offerings of pilgrims, imperial, regal, noble and ignoble, including a remarkable topaz, five inches in diameter, given by the Emperor Joseph II., and a diamond cross, presented by the Empress Maria Theresa. The image, which is about 18 inches high, and rudely carved to represent the Virgin, is said to be 700 years old, and perfectly black. She is seated in a chair, holding the infant Saviour in her arms, clothed in the costliest stuffs, and glittering with jewels and gems, true or false. The lamps, the altar, and other decorations, are of solid silver, the gifts of pious devotees, and I have been credibly informed that the total number of pilgrims who visit the spot in one year are scarcely less than 100,000, including a large number from Vienna itself, where, every year, at a stated season, printed bills are affixed to all the Church doors, stating the time fixed for the pilgrimage to Mariazell, and the indulgences to be obtained by it. Pilgrims assemble from every parish on the day appointed, and, headed by priests and banners, proceed on their journey, and generally arrive at Mariazell about the 2nd of July.

The scenes which take place there on such occasions are little better than those which have long disgraced certain places in Ireland. Though the town consists principally of inns and ale-houses to accommodate the perpetual influx of visitors, which never ceases all the year round, except when snow has rendered the mountains impassable, it is not possible, during the summer season, for the greater part of the crowd to find lodging; and even if it were, a large portion of them are too poor to pay for it. These, from necessity, and many others from less justifiable motives, spend the night in the neighbouring woods, both sexes intermingled, and till morning dawns they continue drinking and singing songs, which are anything but hymns of devotion.

Fighting used to be the order of the night, so long as the procession from Gratz (which is always likewise a numerous one) performed its pilgrimage at the same time with that from Vienna. The public scandal, however, which resulted from these disgraceful scenes at last made it necessary for the authorities to put an end to them, by ordering that the pilgrimages should take place at different times, and, consequently, that from Gratz does not now arrive till the 12th of August.

Such orgies seem worthy of a certain black gentleman rather than of the Blessed Virgin, in whose honour they profess to be performed; but why Christians of any class should have a preference for such sable images does certainly appear to be somewhat unaccountable.—Yours truly,

A CONSTANT READER.

We are obliged to our correspondent for calling our attention to the subject of pilgrimages, which we shall probably ere long give our readers some further information about. We were quite aware of the existence of the black virgin of Mariazell, and have ourselves seen some similar ones, and several pictures of great antiquity, mostly in the rude style of Byzantine art, representing the Virgin and child as of a negro complexion. These are usually stiff, ungainly productions, covered over with embroidered and tinsel silk or velvet, with two holes cut in it to allow the heads of the Virgin and child to be seen, and are resplendent with gold, diamonds, and other gems, the gifts of wealthy pilgrims. Sometimes the palladium of the shrine is a hideous black figure carved in wood, as the celebrated one of Alt-Cetting in Bavaria, one of the most frequented places of pilgrimage in Europe, which might well be termed the Bavarian Loretto, as thousands of devotees repair annually to the shrine of the Black Virgin there, whose image is said to have come from the east in the latter part of the seventh century.

There is an equally famous black image of the Virgin at Puy in the Velai, in France, which is said to be one of the most ancient figures of the Blessed Virgin, and to have been brought from Palestine about the time of the first crusade, and has a legend connected with it, which our readers may find in Mons. Collin de Plancy's *Legends of the Blessed Virgin*, p. 99, a work which we have already noticed in our pages. We need scarcely add, as he does, that we will not vouch for the authenticity of the details, though we think it indeed highly probable that such images were not of Christian origin.

"When the shepherds left the stable of Bethlehem (says Mons. de Plancy), and spread through the mountains the wonders of that sacred night on which the Saviour of the world was born, the happy tidings reached a tribe of Arabs on the confines of Egypt, who came to see our Lady and her divine infant. On their return they carved her image, representing her seated

with her holy child on her lap. This figure they attached to one of the columns of the Kaaba, and placed her in the number of their divinities. This fact is mentioned by Arabian historians. El Azhraki relates that the figure of the Virgin Mary, with the young Aissa (Jesus) upon her knees, was sculptured as a divinity against one of the columns of the Kaaba (or sacred dwelling), and that it was to be seen there at the time of Mahomet. This (continues Mons. de Plancy) is said to be the ancient image venerated at Puy, and, as well may be conceived, is the object of Mary's great complacency." He is good enough to subjoin for us the description of this image given by Faujas de St. Fond in his *Recherches sur les Volcans eteints du Vivarais et du Veluy*. This author, he says, was permitted to examine the statue minutely, and though of the modern philosophic school, describes it to be the most ancient one in France.

"It is placed (says De St. Fond) over a Roman altar, surmounted by a canopy. Both our Lady and her child are black; she is covered with a large mantle of cloth of gold, covered with precious stones and other enrichments. Her feet are covered with shoes of the same stuff; and her head is adorned with a crown of antique form, somewhat like an ancient helmet. Another crown of richer work and material is suspended over the figure; rows of small pearls hang from the back of the head like hair; her eyes are painted, and have small demi-spherical pieces of glass or crystal, which give them great lustre. The image is about two feet and a half high. Our Lady is seated in the manner of the ancient divinities of Egypt. The execution of the work is rude, and such as might be expected from the hands of primitive workmen. Its material is cedar wood, covered with small bands of linen, pasted over the wood in a very skilful manner, according to the Egyptian fashion. From this examination of it, St. Fond declared it to be an Egyptian statue!"

We think it likely that the still more celebrated image at Loretto, which we described in our last vol., p. 49 (from the account of the Roman Catholic historian, Rohrbacher), as made of cedar wood, is in like manner painted black; for there is at Prague, in Bohemia, opposite the Czernin Palace, a chapel, said to be an exact copy of the Holy House of Loretto, and the interior imitated correctly both in size and colour (apparently from casts of the original in plaster of Paris), in which the image of the Virgin is black; doubtless, in exact imitation of the far-famed original.

Of course, there are numberless legends of miracles done by those sable images, much on a par with that already recorded of the Virgin of Tournay, who, when that place was besieged, advanced to the ramparts, and by catching the balls of the besiegers in her apron saved the town, though she could not prevent her face being blackened with the powder! But as we fear our readers would scarcely be disposed to believe such stories without better proof than we are able to give them of their authenticity, we shall here close our notice of black virgins for the present.

## FABER ON THE SACRAMENT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

DEAR SIR,—I have been led by your article on Father F. W. Faber's late work on the Blessed Sacrament to look through the volume, and however I may agree with your criticism upon it in other respects, I really cannot assent to your observation that it is more dry than that gentleman's other works. On the contrary, it seems to me to be full of matter of the deepest interest, not only to those in whose craniums "the love of the marvellous" is more than ordinarily developed, but also to those whose prosaic temperament leads them to smile at the gullibility of the more credulous part of their fellow-countrymen.

To give an example or two. Would not ordinary readers almost suspect Father Faber of suppressed jocularity, when he tells us, in page 136, that St. Pascal Babylon's *dead body* used to teach the devotion of the Blessed Sacrament, by *knocking in its coffin* whenever the host was elevated in the Church where it was! or that Jane the Meatless, the Norfolk maiden, could distinguish a consecrated host amid numbers that were unconsecrated; or that a man mentioned by Gerson could detect the Blessed Sacrament by the sense of *smell*! (p. 532). So serious, however, is the good father, that he actually takes the trouble to enumerate and classify the saints who could *feel, taste, smell, hear*, and see the Blessed Sacrament. Gorres, he tells us, gives the following examples:—1. Those who could *feel* it—Mary of Agreda, and Rose of Lima. 2. Those who could *taste* it—Lucy of Adelshausen, Angela of Foligno, Ida of Louvain. 3. Those who could *smell* it—Giles of Rheggio, Catherine of Siena, Philip Neri, Herman Joseph. 4. Those who could *hear* it—Jerome Gratian, Henri Luso, Joseph of Cupertino. 5. Those who could *see* it—Joseph of Cupertino, Veronica of Binasco, Peter of Toulouse, Catherine of Siena, Mary of Oignies, &c. (p. 532, note).

In the same page he tells us that, "One day St. Theresa was lifted up from the ground in an ecstasy at the moment of communion, so high that the priest could not reach her to give her the host. Suddenly, he saw it escape from his fingers and fly into her mouth!" In